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CIA in his resume? Good for George!

Evidence that Vice President Bush worked for the CIA in the early 1960s — more than a decade before he was appointed to head the agency by President Ford — is decidedly flimsy.

The claim is based on a 1963 memo written by former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover saying that "Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency" was briefed on the reaction of Cuban exiles in Miami to the assassination of President Kennedy.

George Bush is a far from unusual name. The Manhattan telephone directory alone lists more than 140 Bushes — including three Georges.

Thus the memorandum scarcely proves that Vice President Bush worked for the CIA during his years in the private sector.

But what if Bush *did* do work for the agency in the 1960s? The implication of this mini-controversy is that CIA work is something about which the vice president should be embarrassed.

This is utter nonsense.

The CIA plays a vital role in defending U.S. interests around the world. If

Bush gave of his time to the CIA while he was in the oil business in Texas, that's only to his credit.

As for denying previous ties to the agency on the occasion of his appointment as director of Central Intelligence, Bush would have had good reasons for keeping quiet about that part of his past.

The CIA's intelligence-gathering operations are, of necessity, clandestine in nature. If the identities of its personnel — even former employees — were to become known, years of painstaking work could conceivably be compromised.

There's no reason, in fact, for the agency to make public the vocations of those who serve as intelligence sources.

It wouldn't be astonishing if Bush had CIA ties. The vice president's record as a World War II Navy combat pilot demonstrates an early inclination toward public service.

If Bush did CIA work in the 1960s, that's nothing for him to be ashamed about. Would that other national candidates had such "flaws."